

Planning Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

May 15, 2019

Town Council Chambers

Present

Mayor L. Boucher, Chair

Deputy Mayor D. MacInnis

Councillor W. Cormier

T. Barkhouse

C. Hughes

J. Bain, Director of EDPC, Planning & Development Services

P. Dec, Planner

J. Lawrence, CAO

S. Scannell, Director of Community Development

D. Halfpenny, Secretary

Absent

R. Sers.

Guests

Jenny Lugar, WSP

Christina Lovitt, WSP

Councillor D. Roberts

Councillor M Farrell

Councillor A. Murray

Councillor J. MacPherson

D. Wilson, Deputy Clerk

L. Basinger, Special Projects Coordinator

K. Gorman, Director of Communications

Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m

Approval of Agenda

"It was moved and seconded, that the Agenda for the Planning Advisory Committee meeting of May 15, 2019 be approved." Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes

"It was moved and seconded, that the Planning Advisory Minutes of February 11, 2019 be approved." Motion carried.

Planning Application - 52 Victoria Street

J. Bain, Director of EDPC reported that he had met with Mr. F. McVicar on the property. He noted that a Development Agreement is a negotiated process and that Mr. McVicar is not in favor of a fence but instead proposes to meet the privacy concerns through landscaping provisions. His rationale was that he would have to remove several mature trees to facilitate the installation of a fence, and that he believes the trees would also aid in reducing stormwater concerns of the adjacent property. His plan is to plant additional 5ft mature coniferous trees to enhance privacy for his tenants and the neighbours.

J. Bain stated that the proposal of F. McVicar through the Development Agreement Process requires him as the developer to meet the Town Policy requirements in preserving privacy to the neighbouring property owners, have a stormwater management plan, and following minimum architectural and site development plans. J. Bain concluded that by providing the additional 5 ft mature coniferous trees F. McVicar would meet the conditions for privacy.

J. Bain reiterated that the staff recommendation is for the proposal be sent to Town Council for approval. However, he advised that the Planning Advisory Committee had two options:

- 1) To make a recommendation to Council to approve the original proposal.
- 2) To choose to not support the proposal without the fence.

J. Bain stressed that the developer would have the option to return to the UARB to continue with his original appeal of the Town's refusal to rezone his property, where, if he was successful in that appeal, there would not be the same controls in place as outlined in the proposal submitted under Development Agreement.

Discussion followed on concerns about the number of bedrooms, parking issues, architectural design, privacy, and stormwater management.

Motion

"It was moved and seconded, that the Planning Advisory recommend to Council that the proposed Development Agreement for 52 Victoria Street which is to include clarification of 5 ft coniferous trees as part of the privacy requirements and adherence to the stormwater management plan as indicated in the submission be given first reading." Motion Carried.

MPS and LUB Review Presentation

M. L. Boucher welcomed J. Lugar and C. Lovitt from WSP to the Planning Advisory Meeting. The Chair asked that all questions be held until after the WSP presentation.

J. Lugar explained the process of developing the first drafts of the Municipal Planning Strategy, and the Land Use Bylaw. She noted that WSP had held engagement sessions in Antigonish which assisted in the development of 5 discussion papers. She stated that WSP had researched best practices of other Municipalities, reviewed Antigonish issues, and through consultation had summarized a direction to undertake in moving forward with the first draft of the MPS and LUB.

She noted that the Planning Advisory Committee, Council and the community have the opportunity to provide input during the next two weeks. She advised that the public open house will be held on May 23. She noted that these sessions will provide valuable input for WSP towards the generation of the second draft. She explained that once the input has been received it is at this stage the Second Draft will be developed and will then come back before PAC and then Council and upon approval be sent to the province for registration. She projected that the expected timeline for adoption would be late 2019.

J. Lugar noted that the current MPS and LUB is 25 years old and that a lot has changed in Antigonish since then. She stated that details of the people in Antigonish were noted as what do they love, what are their aspirations. She explained that the engagement sessions within the community indicated that they want more walking, biking and active transportation. The model for growth and development she advised is to incorporate location of service such as a transportation network, infrastructure for electric, sewer and water, sidewalks and streets, etc. ; consideration of age, and other demographics and steps needed in maintaining vibrant community development. She stated that the MPS and LUB must be set up to make decisions, to grow and develop the Town.

J. Lugar stated that WSP had consulted with 6 Municipal Staff, 15 stakeholder groups, 7 Council members, 100 plus community members, and received 254 Community members input through an online survey. She advised that the emerging priorities were: 1) Housing Types; 2) Recreation and Culture; 3) Mixed Compatible Land Use; 4) Economic Development; 5) Accessibility and Equity; 6) Mobility and Active Transportation, and 7) Working Collaboratively with partners.

She provided a visual of an evaluation matrix outlining one of the seven priorities and showed how they colour coded. She advised how the discussion papers encompassed an analysis of what works elsewhere and consideration of whether it will work here.

She explained how the MPS must meet the legal permitted requirements as outlined in the Municipal Government Act as mandated by the province. She acknowledged that the Municipal Planning Strategy provided policy direction for Council in a broad sense. The Land Use Bylaw she advised is more specific as to where and what can be developed. She referred to the new designations and zones, she noted that there are some designations that require further consideration and development.

New Designations and Zones

J. Lugar provided clarity on types of residential area designations. She stressed that these are areas that will require careful review to determine if they are suitable to Council and advised that some are intended to be proactive for future growth. She explained that the new terminology for Manufactured Homes will allow for the evolution of new types of manufactured homes a change from the previous Mobile Home Parks.

She explained the Mixed Use Designation and explained how it is in keeping with community engagement session comments to see more affordable housing options and greater opportunities for small businesses to evolve.

Alternative Development of Historic Buildings

She noted that historic buildings can be designated without the owner's approval.

Commercial Designations

J. Lugar advised that three levels for commercial development the first being general commercial, industrial Commercial and StFx University Commercial.

J. Lugar noted that Mixed Compatible Land Use and Maintained Neighbourhood Character were identified as being a priority to participants of the engagement process.

1. Residential Designation
 - Gentle Density
 - Heritage Buildings
 - Highlight Active Transportation through and between neighbourhoods
2. Prioritize Mobility and Active Transportation
 - Increase physical activity
 - Reduce Traffic and Parking issues
 - Environmental Sustainability

J. Lugar advised that bike parking in larger residential developments and car share are two of the ideas that were identified during the public sessions.

Seven Emerging Priorities

1. Work together with other Community partners
2. Increase Diversity and Affordable Housing
 - ie Creation of secondary suites in residential neighbourhoods, small ground units, higher density, minimum lot sizes, new forms for housing to fill in 'missing middle.'
3. Support the Development of Recreation and Culture
 - ie. promoting investment in recreational parks and trails, age friendly investment in recreational parks and trails, age friendly recreational and cultural opportunities
4. Recommend Allocation of Capital Budget for public art.
5. Foster Economic Development in key Commercial Areas and Neighbourhood Nodes.
 - Mixed Use zones with residential and commercial allowing for small business development allowing for a variety of uses.
6. Support Accessibility and Equity
 - Antigonish is attempting to get ahead of the curve by implementing policy in advance of the Provincial Legislation for accessibility. Foster numerous housing and transportation options, and emphasize accessibility and age friendly needs. Create safe well lit areas.
7. Work Collaboratively with Partners
 - In keeping with the mandate of the Municipal Government Act there are guidelines for consultation with the Municipality of the County., non-profits, STFX and having provincial policies embedded into Town policies.

J. Lugar and C. Lovitt welcomed questions from the Planning Advisory Committee and Council.

Councillor Cormier asked where have we been and where are we going?

He commented that the approach has been to create less density in the R1 zones. He spoke about flag lot developments and the pros and cons, he spoke about the push to limit the number of bedrooms in a rental property.

Councillor W. Cormier commented that the designations are different and that he isn't sure of the terminology.

J. Lugar explained that the new designations will allow developers to know what is possible in each area and with the proper controls in place the Town will be able to maintain growth, meet the needs of the citizens, and sustain their tax base. J. Lugar stated that the best approach is to look at the old Land Use Bylaw and compare it to the new one. She noted that the premise is to have more controlled planning.

J. Lugar noted that gentle density is the approach. More mixed use buildings offering multipurpose of store front below and residential above.

C. Lovitt stressed that with draft one it is important for Council to determine what they are comfortable with, what will work and what needs to be changed. She noted that the public consultations showed that citizens want more housing for seniors and young professionals that is accessible to the downtown. The Town has an aging population

Councillor D. MacInnis asked if the zoning map is available. He commented that overall the first draft was a good job.. However, he would need more time to review the draft and that having the zoning map would make it easier to identify what areas would allow for what type of development. Councillor D. Macinnis asked when the zoning map draft would be completed. He asked for clarification of Comprehensive Development District and Mixed Use Centre terms.

C. Lovitt responded that the Zoning Map will be completed and sent out with Draft 2 of the Municipal Planning Strategy and Land Use Bylaw. She asked that Council and PAC members take a deeper look at the Draft and send any additional questions they may have to S. Scannell, Director of Community. S. Scannell will then condense and send to WSP. WSP will then review with Eastern District Planning Commission.

She noted that Comprehensive Development District would be the creation of a whole new community area. It would be a holding zone and it would be a slow process to develop this larger tract of land. She advised that there are very few sites available in the Town of Antigonish for such a development.

A Mixed Use Centre is a neighbourhood, that would be densely populated on an arterial street featuring commercial uses in different pockets. She used West Street as an example featuring walkable places and providing for an age friendly balance.

J. Lugar explained that it is important for the draft to have details of what policy is doing, are the policies hitting the mark? Where is it happening on the map? Conversation about servicing with Engineering, etc. Deadline being met for receiving feedback will all determine when the 2nd draft will be ready. She noted areas such as Downtown and James street have been identified as areas for mixed use buildings.

Councillor J. MacPherson stated that he has issues with the increase in density in residential zone and in particular the granny suites. He commented that should the granny die then the house would be rented to anyone. He advised he is for maintaining the integrity of neighbourhoods and that high density will lead to lack of privacy.

C. Lovitt advised that gentle density such as adding granny suites would allow for low density growth and to meet the needs of the often overlooked middle, that being young professionals and active seniors. She noted that yes anyone may live in the small suite and that it would have one or two bedrooms.

J. Lugar commented that privacy issues are often addressed with buffering, landscaping and architectural design.

Discussion followed on how small the granny suites could be and having a square footage maximum size. It was noted that granny suites are different than flag lots in that the property can't be subdivided. If a sale of the property took place the granny suite remains part of the property and can't be sold separately.

Councillor A. Murray stated that he was very pleased to see bike lanes, community gardens, and dog park included in the updates.

Councillor D. Roberts commented that she is in favor of progress, and that citizen engagement has and will continue to play a role in determining how to move forward with the changes to the MPS and LUB.

Councillor J. Macpherson reiterated that the community needs established controls in place, certain things need to be prohibited if not the residential homeowners can't protect their most valuable asset.

C. Lovitt noted that one point of interest is that Heritage Properties can be designated without the property owners position.

J. Lugar stated that with the slight changes policy such as Unsightly Premises would move under the Community Standards which would streamline enforcement matters. She noted that it is a calculated risk as other bylaws are in place and she referred to J. Bain.

J. Bain advised that as soon as the new Municipal Planning Strategy and the Land Use Bylaw is in place, and based on the priorities of Council timelines would be established. Protections are in place until adoption. Currently, the Development Agreement process is in place.

Councillor W. Cormier says that details are important, necessary to nail down sizes of granny suites, parking, maintaining privacy for residents in residential neighbourhoods.

C. Hughes commented that accessibility is crucial with an aging population, she used the example of her senior Mom being unable to live alone and the necessity to provide options for granny suites, and other options. She noted that it is important to encourage development and add to the tax base,

Councillor M. Farrell stated that growth and sustainability will require an increase density in population which must be creative, done carefully and constructively.

T. Barkhouse commented that vacant lots should be identified and owners encouraged to maintain these lots properly and encouraged to develop the lots.

J. Lugar acknowledged that there are a lot of proposed changes to the LUB such as facilitating smaller businesses on Main Street, more mixed use buildings, fostering economic development, working with and planning for our existing and changing demographic, creating the kind of community that you want to see. Live close to downtown with more active transportation opportunities. Expanding the opportunity for businesses areas to develop beyond downtown core.

Mayor L. Boucher advised that she has concerns with creating businesses too far from the downtown core, she commented that the downtown core is vibrant and that council wants to maintain its support for a strong downtown.

C. Lovitt reminded all present that the Open House will be held at the People's Place Library in the Bistro Area on May 23rd with a lunch and evening session. All are welcomed to attend.

Mayor L. Boucher thanked PAC, Council for providing input. She noted that it is a big moment and that WSP has put a lot of work into the project and that contributions from the constituents and staff have played a huge role in moving forward the first completed review of the MSP and LUB in 25 years. She stated that there is more work to do and she looks forward to seeing the 2nd draft and finalizing the process in order to have documents in place that will take the Town into the next phase of growth. She stressed that this is not a political campaigning time but more of putting the tools in place to facilitate the town moving forward, maintaining a strong tax base and meeting the needs of the citizens.

Motion to Adjourn.

"It was moved and seconded, that the Planning Advisory meeting be adjourned." Motion carried

The meeting was adjourned at 7:22 p.m.